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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 2877
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 8481
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: INTER-AGENCY HUMAN TRAFFICKING - BONDED LABOR
CONFERENCE BRINGS TOGETHER GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Ministry of Interior hosted an inter-agency conference on human trafficking and bonded labor on February 3. Officials from all four provinces attended. Participants included the provincial Inspector Generals of Police, the Ministry of Labor, provincial Departments of Labour, the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Federal Investigation Agency, as well as child protection and immigration bureaus. The focus of the conference was to discuss the problems of transnational human trafficking, bonded labor, and child labor, and to address difficulties in data collection and reporting to meet the requirements of the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. PolOff was invited to attend and take questions. Authorities voiced their concerns about Pakistan's trafficking problems and the root issues of illiteracy, poverty and social disempowerment. In addition to discussing ongoing efforts, they also highlighted the needs and challenges that prevent them from moving forward to effectively tackle these issues. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Nearly 35 government officials from around the country convened to discuss transnational human trafficking bonded labor and child labor problems at a conference in Islamabad on February 3 that was organized by the Ministry of Interior. Participants came from as far away as Quetta and Karachi. In attendance were officials for all four provincial Inspector Generals of Police, the Ministry of Labor, provincial Departments of Labour, the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Federal Investigation Agency, and child protection and immigration bureaus. Officials shared data for the upcoming TIP Report, and PolOff took questions on the history and purpose of the TIP Report and also explained the criteria used in assigning tier rankings.

¶3. (SBU) Participants discussed for more than two hours efforts to tackle labor rights issues, including debt labor practices and child labor. They spoke about the different facets of bonded labor in Pakistan. They noted the history behind the money lending system (referred to as "peshgi") that is prevalent in agriculture and brick making, as well as the resistance from both employers and workers to eliminate peshgis. Officials from the Departments of Labour from Punjab and Sindh (where bonded labor is most often found) commented that many bonded laborer problems did not require police intervention. For example, the majority of brick kiln workers' complaints that lawyers for the Bonded Labor Legal Aid Service Units in Punjab helped to resolve in 2009 pertained to payment of minimum wages and contractual

disagreements that fall under the Factories Act. The Legal Aid Service Units resolved most of these disputes with employer-employee mediation or, when that failed, in the courts.

¶4. (SBU) Police from Punjab and Sindh demonstrated empathy and a desire to assist poor "haris" (peasants - a non-derogatory word used for laborers), but they also stressed that the U.S. needs to understand the factors that disempower the poor: namely illiteracy and a lack of economic alternatives. Police also spoke candidly about resource constraints and the difficulties in resolving labor disputes at the same time they are responding to murders, terrorist attacks, militant-recruiting, rapes, honor crimes and kidnappings.

¶5. (SBU) The conference ended with a proposal to meet again and to establish more mechanisms for interagency dialogue and cooperation. In a February 4 follow up meeting, the Deputy Secretary of FIA, Aslam Khundi, discussed with PolOff the agency's challenges and needs relating to the identification and protection of sex trafficking victims.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: Pakistan's commitment to addressing human trafficking was evidenced by the distance officials traveled to discuss these issues at the conference, and the dedication and motivation they demonstrated despite resource constraints and the fact that they come from agencies with distinct mandates and scopes of power. Several participants noted that this was the first-time in their recollection that officials from these different agencies had come together to

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solely discuss trafficking and bonded labor. Participants had a very open dialogue with Embassy PolOff and requested the U.S. government provide assistance to build their capacity, support ongoing initiatives, and to teach and equip them to implement best practices. End Comment.
PATTERSON